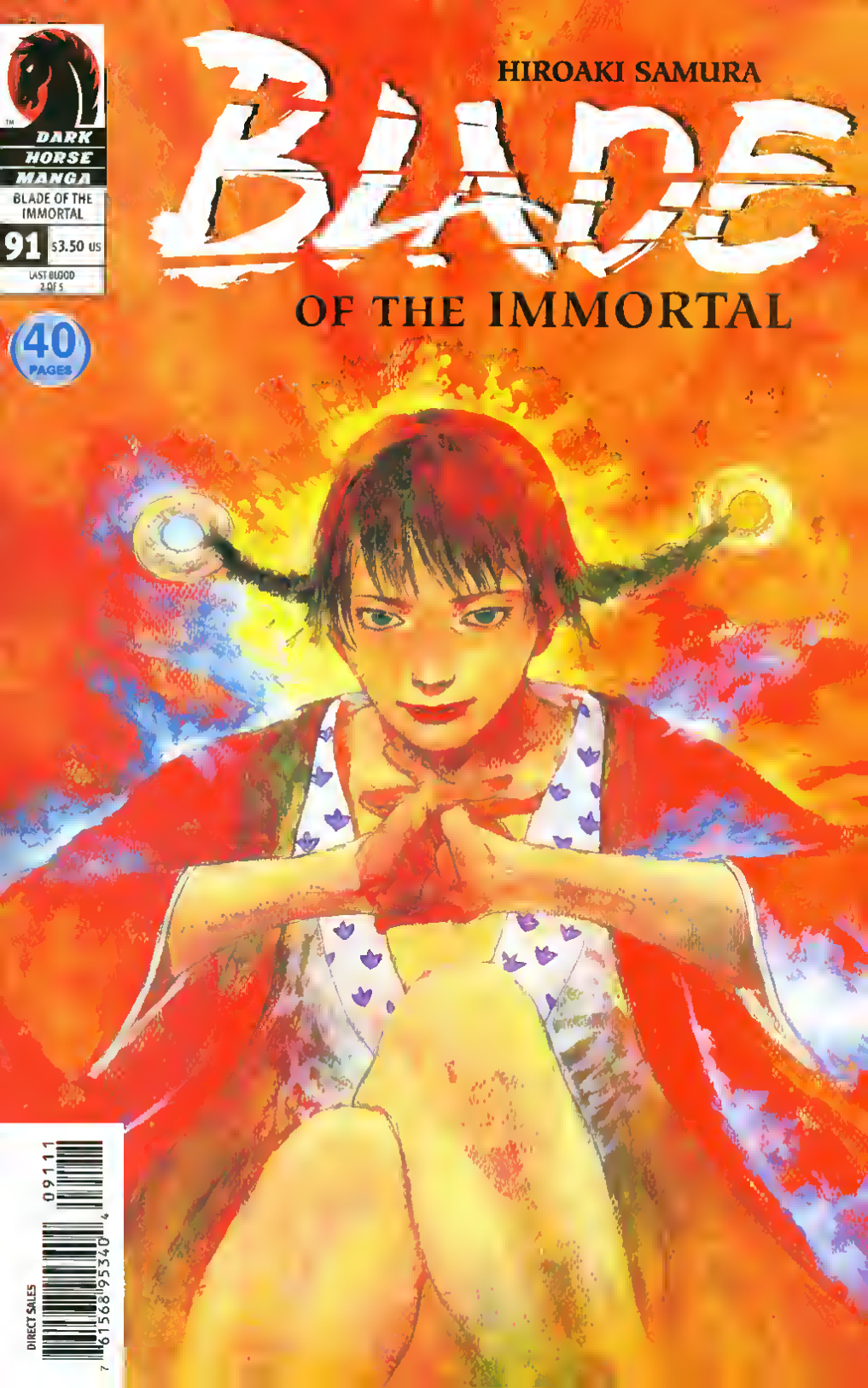
DARK HORSE MANGA
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
91
$3.50 US
LAST BLOOD 2 OF 5
40 PAGES
HIROAKI SAMURA
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OF THE IMMORTAL
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by

DANA LEWIS and TOREN SMITH

lettering and retouch by

TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *rōnin*

RIN

Last heir of the Mutenichi *ryū dōjō* destroyed by Itto *ryū*

ANOTSU

The leader of the Itto-*ryū* sword school

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister To atone for the 100 good people who died at his hand under his corrupt lord Manji vowed to slay 1 000 evil men in exchange for the release of death

When her parents were murdered by Anotsu Kagehisa's Itto-*ryu* swordsmen, Rin Asano became part of a mad revenge cycle which began when Anotsu's grandfather was thrown out of the Asano clan's Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* fifty years before A quest for vengeance was instilled in Anotsu, a similar quest now haunts Rin Upon learning of Manji she enlisted his aid to destroy the Itto *ryu* and avenge her parents

After leaving Manji to complete her quest alone, Rin comes into a strange, unsteady alliance with Anotsu in order to survive while they are both on the run in Kaga With a revenge-hungry band of Shingyoto-*ryu* swordfighters on their trail they stop only when Anotsu tracks down his heart's true desire Makie who once bested Manji in battle After saving Makie's life and continuing on their journey Anotsu is hit with a bad case of tetanus and lockjaw, contracted after being cut with a poisoned sword in combat Suffering from sickness and hunger this strange pair is finally caught by the Shingyoto-*ryū* students with Manji hot on their heels!

designer DEBRA BAILEY editor PHILIP SIMON publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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MANJI! OW! MANGF!
UH... KOZUE.
DON'T THINK I GOTTA REMIND YOU.
WE'RE NOT BABY-SITTERS, MAN.
ENEMY, RANDOM GUY, WHAT-EVER.
IS IT COOL IF...
...WE CUT HIM DOWN?!

.....
.....
SURE.
WHAT ELSE...?
INSTEAD OF SHOWING OFF--

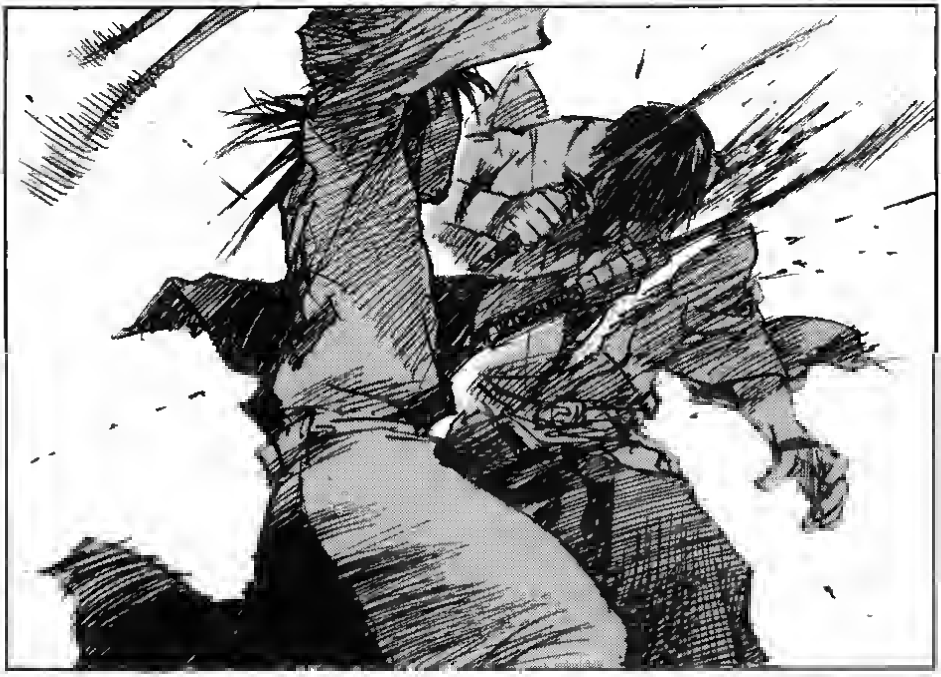
--BETTER MOVE OR YOU'RE DEAD MEAT!

KANG
HANG..?

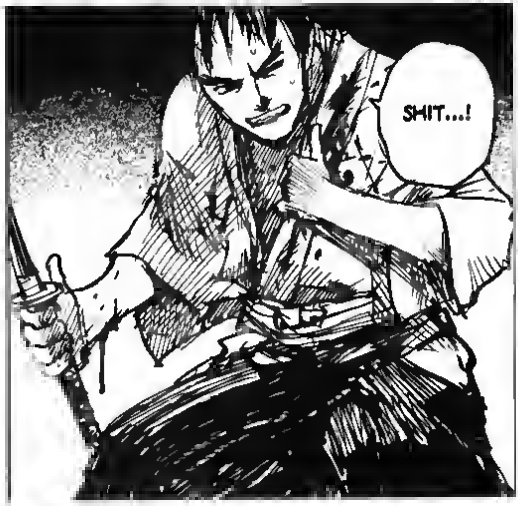
HA!

SHING

DIE...
!!



?!?
HUH...?!


SHIT...!

BUT, TŌNO!
STAY BACK, GUYS!
DON'T FORGET THAT THE GUY YOU HAVE TO KILL IS...
NO!! IF TWO OF US CAN'T TAKE HIM, DAMMIT...
...HOW CAN WE FACE THE MASTER WHEN WE DIE?!

ANOTSU KAGEHISA !!
...THAT MAN!
!!
WHAT THE--?!

無限の住人

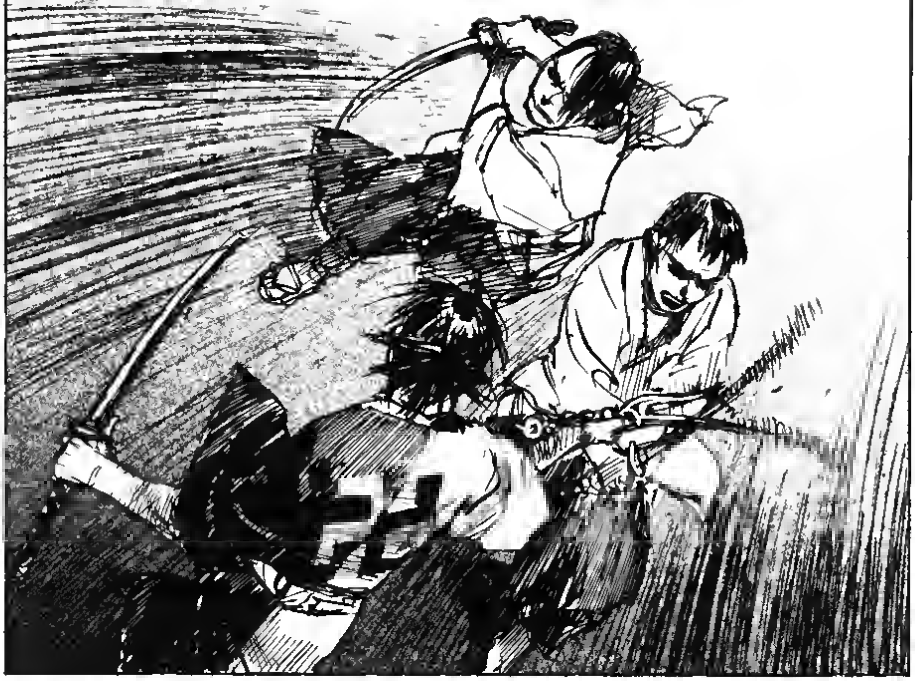
LAST BLOOD
-part two-

DID YOU SAY...
...“ANOTSU KAGEHISA” ...?!
.....
.....

BUT... WHICH *ONE*?
NAW... *OBVIOUS*, AIN'T IT? THESE ARE THE *DŌJŌ* GUYS...
...THAT SHINGYŌTŌ-*RYŪ* BUNCH.
WEARING THOSE WIMPY *HAKAMA*...
BUNCH OF LOSERS...

ALL
BUT
ONE!

MANJI
!
GET
LOST,
PUNK!



CHAK

WHOA..!
HOP
HOP

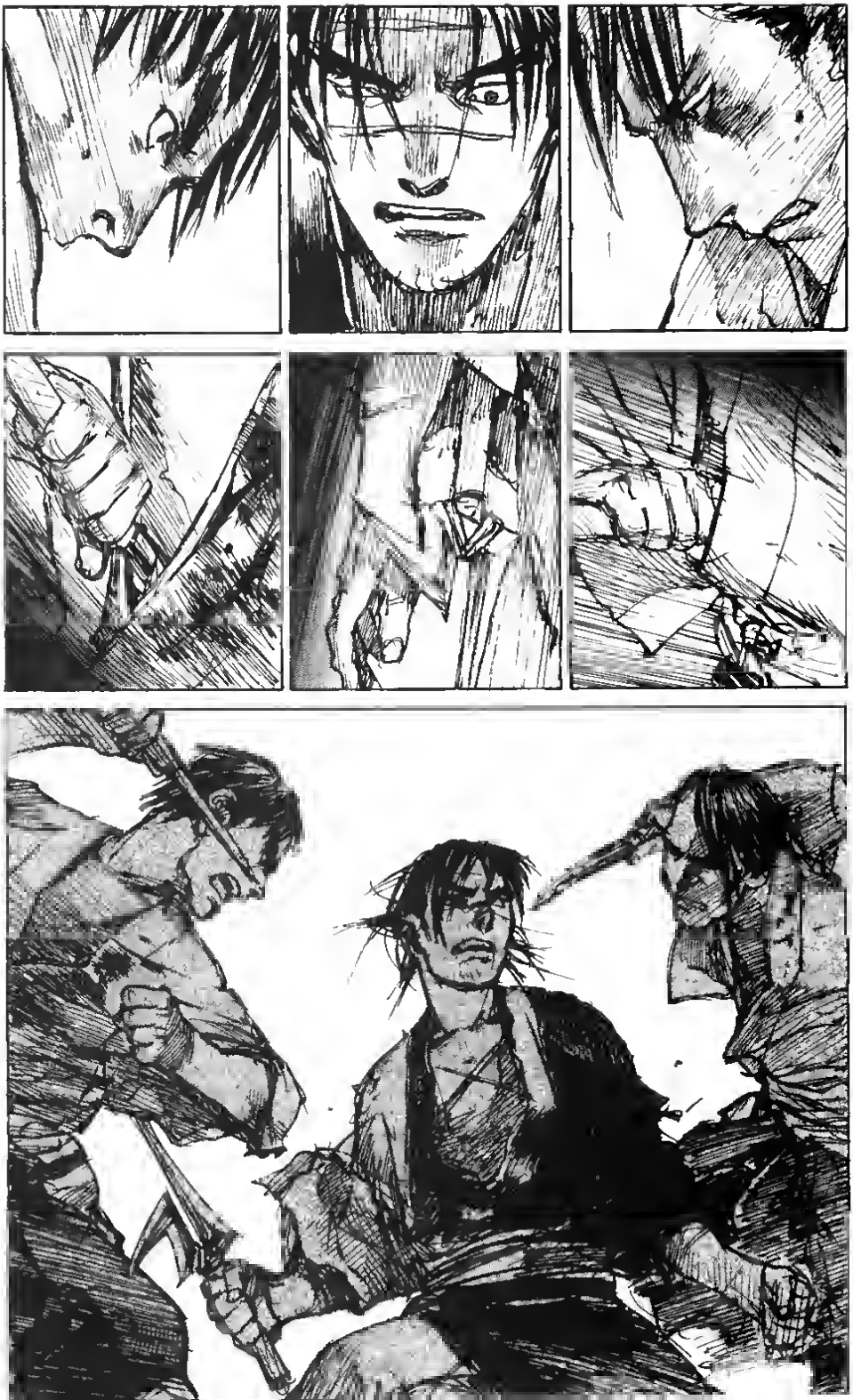
HUH?! AGAIN ?!
WAIT A SEC... NOW I GET IT.
THESE GUYS AREN'T WILLING TO DIE TO KILL ME!
GREAT. WHAT A TOTAL SCREW-UP, ANOTSU RIGHT UNDER MY NOSE, AND...
...I PICK A FIGHT WITH THE CLOWNS CHASING HIM!

AND EVEN WORSE...
...THEY'RE PRETTY DAMN GOOD.

DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THEY'LL GIVE UP EASY.
HMM... HOW MANY OF THEM ARE THERE...?

.....
.....

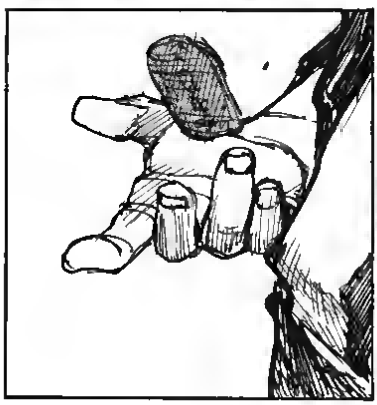
SHRING
NOW
!!



?!
NOW FOR...
...THE FINISH!

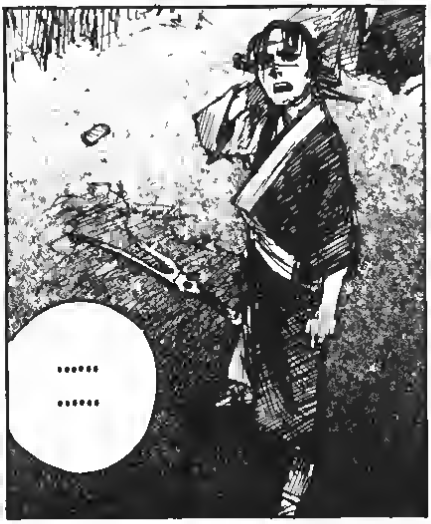
AUGH!
CHOP
CHOP!

WHAT
TH--?!
!!



YO, MANJI!!! CHANGE FROM THE DOC!
LOOKS LIKE YOU COULD USE IT.

EH...? ISN'T THAT--?


.....
.....

GEEZ... IS THIS A JOKE?

TALK ABOUT YOUR WORST CASE SCENARIO!
NOW THE ITTŌ-RYŪ SHOWS UP... WHAT A NIGHTMARE!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!
YEAH! THIS AIN'T NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!
MAGATSU TAITO, ITTŌ-RYŪ.
DID YOU SAY...
..."ITTŌ-RYŪ"...?!

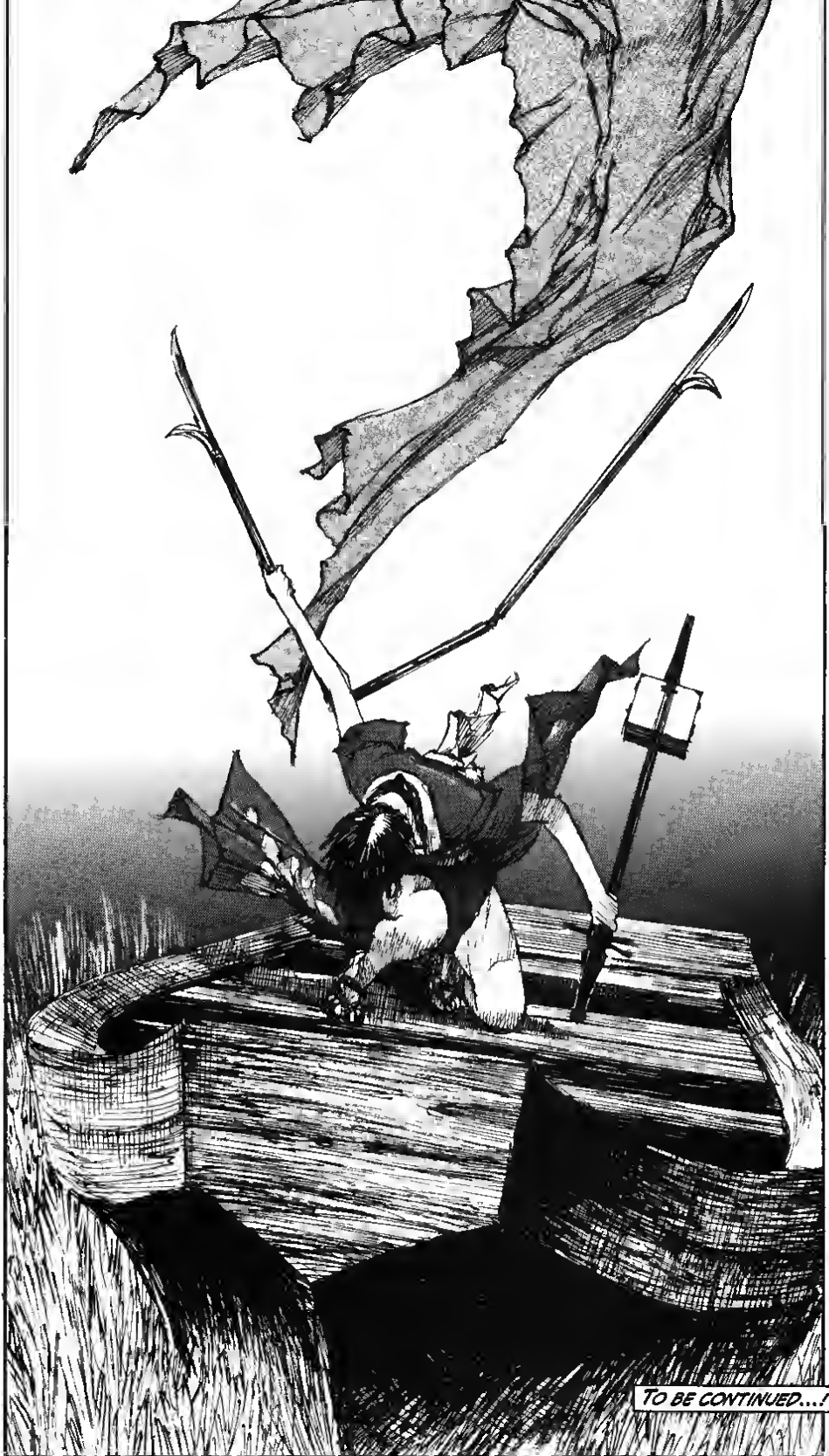
...UH...
ER...
OH, SHIT.
MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT...
A-ANOTSU KAGEHISA!
C-CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE!
ENOUGH W-WITH THESE INTERFERING OUTSIDERS!

ITTŌ-RYŪ? SHINGYŌTŌ-RYŪ?! I D-DON'T CARE!
IT'S YOUR LIFE I WANT!
I'M FINISHING THIS N-NOW! ANOTSU KAGEHISA!
HUH...?!
HEY! WAIT A--

!!
WHY, YOU--
BOSS...
!!

AH...?!
WH-
WHAT?!
HOW...?!

.....
.....
.....!


TO BE CONTINUED...!

LETTERS

send letters to:
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GLOSSARY

***dōjō*:** a school for combat and self defense training in martial arts, here, a training center for swordsmanship

***hara-kiri*:** ritual suicide by disemboweiment.

***hakama*:** outer garment worn by samurai, made of leather or heavy cloth and sometimes dyed with distinctive colors and patterns.

***Ittō-ryū*:** the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

***ryū*:** a sword school

***Shingyōtō-ryō*:** a *dōjō* which celebrated older, harsher traditions of combat training, recently led by Ibane Kensui, who committed *hara-kiri*.

"DEUS EX MAKIE," as Toren Smith said when he turned in this issue's script. Makie's back, perhaps ready to do some damage to these eager Shingyōtō-*ryū* students... or to Manji... we'll see soon enough. In the meantime, brush up on Makie and Manji's previous encounters by reading *Blade of the Immortal*, Volume 3: *Dreamsong*, where we also get our first glimpse at the kernel of romance that resides in Anotsu Kagehisa's black heart. Manji, Magatsu, Makie... all knocking heads as a group of headstrong, bloodthirsty swordsmen drool for Anotsu's death! Such a satisfyingly ferocious face-off! See you next month for another searing hot *Blade* episode... and we'll be expecting your emails and letters!

—Philip Simon

Dear *BOTI* Letters,

I want to thank you for translating and bringing *Blade of the Immortal* to America. I have just finished reading the first eleven volumes of *BOTI*, and it left a deep impression on me. The artwork is amazing. I like the sketchy style, and the fight scenes are drawn so well. Hiroaki Samura is so brilliant at weaving action with a slight bit of romance together with a bit of comedy.

BOTI has become one of my favorite graphic novel series. The characters are unique and deep. I like how there is a strong female warrior. Usually, women fighters can't compare to the males, but this woman is a better fighter than all men. I also like how the characters talk differently. Some talk very formally, and others talk like street punks. The weapons the characters use are so different from other comics. I like the curved sword Anotsu uses.

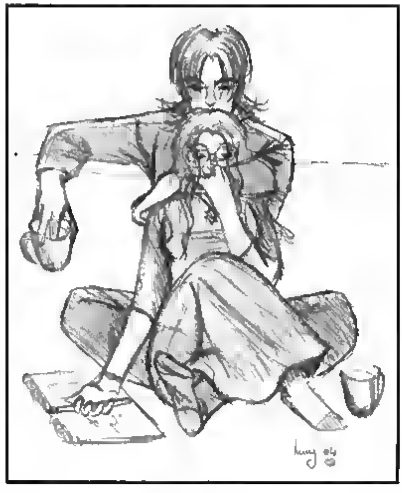
I was wondering if there are any other series by Hiroaki Samura. If there are, would you be willing to translate it? I was also wondering if you would release more posters of *BOTI*. Perhaps you should release one of Magatsu. I really appreciate all the hard work you guys put in to edit and translate *BOTI*. I hope that you guys will never stop bringing out more of this awesome series.

Winnie Fu
Hacienda Heights, California

Thanks for your support, Winnie! Hiroaki Samura does indeed have another book, *Ohikkoshi*, which is a modern-era, comedic love story. A Japanese collection has been published, adding a few more miscellaneous, wacky Samura tales. A Dark Horse edition is highly likely... and *Blade* readers will be the first to get any news!

Hi again, *Blade* letters,

Just to shout back to Simon Davis: of course I'm still reading! Once you've taken up the *Blade*,



Artwork by Lucy Preece, Wales, UK

it's pretty hard to give it up (I guess in that regard I can relate to how Makie feels... well, sort of anyway). So you're but JUST a fan? No better people, my friend. A laconic, one-eyed hero, a charismatic and ambiguous villain, a dash of the supernatural, and, of course, those *kenshi* swordswomen; I knew you couldn't resist it! (I just hope that Rin doesn't end up like Kyasuka...)

At least I got one thing right in my previous letter. By now, Dark Horse is publishing Kentaro Miura's *Berserk* (and your sense of timing is as perfect as that of Anotsu himself–they've just stopped translating it here in France!).

Seeing how I have the editorial committee's ear (please humour me and pretend it's true), I'll repeat my previous endorsement of Tsutomu Nihei's *Blame*, and my hope that Dark Horse may consider looking into publishing it (along with its prequel *Noise*). It's best described as "Alice in Cyberpunk Wonderland." I'm pretty certain that only Dark Horse has the commitment to talent and quality to be willing to publish such a demanding piece... and do justice to it. After all, you did sterling work with *Ghost in the Shell: Man-Machine Interface*.

Till next time, Neil Martin
via email

Dear all at *Blade*,

I started reading my fiancé's *Blade* collection two weeks ago, and I've been hooked since issue one. I've just finished reading issue #86. PHEW! He has been collecting *Blade* from the first issue. That's even before he met me! It was the covers that first got me interested, such wonderful artwork. In fact, it was issue #43 that really grabbed my attention, Rin and Manji in a romantic and strikingly beautiful pose. Anyway, to say "Thank you" to my fiancé for letting me read his beloved collection, I've done a "tribute" to the cover of issue #43. If possible, I'd love to see it printed. Imagine the look on his face!

I've been reading the letter pages as I've gone through each issue, and I think I disagree with all the fans who want to see an anime of *Blade*. I really don't think an anime could bring anything extra to the story, and I doubt that anyone else could do Mr. Samura's artwork justice! Let's just leave this one alone and enjoy it as it is–perfect. His pencil and charcoal work is quite original (at least in the limited amount of manga I've been exposed to), and I bet to be able to draw a manga like that is really freeing, if a little more time consuming. As for the plot, this is the best thing about *Blade*, no one is truly bad or truly good, there is no right or wrong side, everyone has their motives and reasons (well except Shira, he is just super-naughty). I can't decide who I want Rin to like more though, Manji or Anotsu... heh.

Well that's the end of my little babble, yet another international fan letter to add to your collection. Thanks to all of you for your hard work–especially the main man!

Yours, Lucy Preece
Wales, United Kingdom

NEXT MONTH:

Last Blood, Part Three

The Shingyōtō-*ryū* swordsmen, on a quest to avenge the curious death of their schoolmaster, are poised to fight the three classiest swordfighters in the *Blade* universe! The stuttering, vindictive Iriya is determined to kill Anotsu, his now-decrepit target, but Makie's return means that he'll have much more trouble than he bargained for. The swaggering Magatsu, still healing from his last battle, faces off against one of the Shingyōtō-*ryū* clan's most honorable students, and a confident Manji, almost *finally* reunited with Rin, begins to dispatch his share of bloodthirsty opponents to the netherworld. Join us as Hiroaki Samura continues to reinvent the *bushidō* grudge match by mixing elements of classic samurai tales and epic Western films with his beloved, punk-rock sensibilities. ***On Sale August 11!***

Samm-BCP

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Alternotive Comics is suffering some very dire cosh flow problems ond I om turning to you for help. In the spring of 2002 our book trode distributor, LPC, filed Chopter 11 bonkruptcy owing Alternotive Comics o lot of money. I hod hoped thot I could weother the storm by toking money from my sovings ond by borrowing on credit until receiving the ogreed-upon 42% of whot LPC owed us. Now over two yeors loter, LPC is still in bonkruptcy proceedings ond I om completely out of sovings and credit.

In the post (prior to LPC) I hod ample working copitol - I had greot credit terms with my vorious printers. Now (post LPC) I hove obsolutely no working copitol ond must pay up front to print every book.

For eoch publicotion, I now woit for oll of the retoiler odvance orders to come in to Diomond, then I contract Diomond to ossign the poyment they'd pay to me to my printer to print the book. This controctuol ogreement costs money and cuts into our razor thin margin. Lock of cosh on hand hos olso caused me to hove to shrink print runs on some books. This increoses the cost per unit of eoch book, ond speeds the looming reprint costs. I've been increosing my publishing schedule over the lost two yeors, ond in hindsight, I exponded too quickly. Alternotive Comics is moving forword with o much more reosonoble, much more foresighted publishing schedule, with some reolly omozing projects in the works!

Alternotive Comics' cosh flow problems have been the only reason for not yet reprinting Bipolar #1 ond Humor Can Be Funny os well os hoving been the only reason o number of books hove been orriving lote or re-solicited. I om osking you to pleose buy Alternotive Comics books from your locol retoilers. In my fonciful imoginotion, the best result would be for retoilers to quickly sell out of oll Alternotive Comics books in inventory to customers ond hurriedly ploce nice reorders with distributors.

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Jeff Moson - Publisher
Alternotive Comics

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